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RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 2801
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RUEHTA/AMEMBASSY ASTANA 0572
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RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 0589
RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE 0852
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 4559
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 2850
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 0870
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 7602
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 1509
RHMFSS/CDR ARCENT KUWAIT DOHA KU
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/CJCS WASHINGTON DC
RUEABNE/DEA HQS WASHDC
RUEHUNV/USMISSION UNVIE VIENNA 0082
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1471
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 2804
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
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C O N F I D E N T I A L TASHKENT 001113

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KCRM](#) [PHUM](#) [MARR](#) [PINR](#) [UZ](#)

SUBJECT: ARCENT COMMANDER MEETS NEW UZBEK DEFENSE MINISTER

REF: A. TASHKENT 901
[1](#)B. TASHKENT 917
[1](#)C. TASHKENT 958
[1](#)D. TASHKENT 971
[1](#)E. TASHKENT 1035

Classified By: Pol/Econ Chief Nicholas Berliner for reasons 1.4 (B,D)

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[11.](#) (C) Summary: ARCENT Commander Lieutenant General James Lovelace met with newly-appointed Defense Minister General-Major Kabil Berdiyev during a September 23-24 visit to Uzbekistan. Berdiyev, who is believed to favor greater cooperation with the U.S., thanked LTG Lovelace for support in the wake of the Kagan munitions depot explosion and suggested areas for further cooperation. Among the areas Berdiyev cited were: counter terrorism, combating religious extremism and counter narcotics. Significantly, this is the first time the MOD included counter-narcotics as one of its primary missions. Berdiyev promised to share specific proposals for cooperation in the near future. LTG Lovelace took the opportunity to recommend that the Government of Uzbekistan accept the Drug Enforcement Administration's (DEA) offer to resume its activities and told Berdiyev that a team from TRANSCOM would like to visit Uzbekistan to look at options for a new supply route for Afghanistan. Berdiyev said he would make the GOU aware of both issues. President Karimov's decision to promote U.S.-leaning defense officials in the wake of the crisis in the Caucasus presents an opportunity to capitalize on the goodwill generated by our timely emergency assistance after the munitions depot explosions and further U.S. objectives. LTG Lovelace also met with the ICRC to signal continued U.S. support for ICRC

prison visits. End summary.

Thanks for Kagan Assistance

¶2. (C) ARCENT Commander Lieutenant General Lovelace visited Uzbekistan on September 23-24 following a successful emergency U.S. assistance program in the wake of munitions depot explosions in Bukhara Province (refs A-D). ARCENT provided land and underwater explosives detectors and will deliver explosive ordnance disposal suits requested by Uzbekistan; a team of ARCENT trainers also worked with Uzbek counterparts in Bukhara on the proper use of the equipment. The Government of Uzbekistan was very appreciative of the assistance.

First Meeting for Defense Minister

¶3. (C) LTG Lovelace was the first foreign official to meet with Defense Minister Berdiyev in his new capacity following his promotion from Commander of the Southwest Military District, where he led the response to the munitions depot explosions. Berdiyev is known to be openly pro-American in his views on military cooperation, and his promotion to Defense Minister is a strong indication from President Karimov about his desire to improve ties with the United States. Moreover, former Defense Minister Ruslan Mirzayaev, whom the Defense Attache Office noted is quietly pro-American, also was promoted to the Deputy Secretary for Military Affairs of the National Security Council. (Comment: This may send a message in the higher reaches of the Government of Uzbekistan and may shift the National Security Council into a more favorable stance toward the United States. End comment.)

Areas for Cooperation

¶4. (C) In the September 23 meeting with LTG Lovelace, Berdiyev said that the Uzbek MOD was working on proposals for cooperation in counter terrorism, combating religious extremism and counter narcotics, areas where he said the U.S. and Uzbekistan had shared visions. Significantly, this is the first time the MOD included counter-narcotics as one of its primary missions. LTG Lovelace acknowledged this and strongly recommended that the Government of Uzbekistan approve the full-fledged return of the DEA; he stressed that any expanded cooperation should involve the DEA since it is the U.S. Government's strategic lead entity on counter-narcotics. Defense Minister (and still General-Major) Berdiyev promised to mention the DEA issue to higher officials in the government. (Note: In July the Government of Uzbekistan provided a murky response to a proposed resumption of activity by DEA, suggesting that Special Agents could be accredited but only as "U.S. Diplomats." End note.)

NGLOC

¶5. (C) LTG Lovelace also informed Berdiyev of the proposed visit by a combined team from TRANSCOM and CENTCOM to look at the logistics of establishing a Northern Ground Line of Communication (NGLOC) into Afghanistan, particularly in light of the situation in Pakistan. Berdiyev noted the information and said that he would convey it to the government, saying that he was not in a position to speak on the issue, however, as with the DEA issue, he promised to raise the issue higher within the GOU.

ICRC

¶ 6. (C) On September 24 LTG Lovelace met with Rafaello Muller, Deputy Head of the Regional ICRC Delegation to discuss the status of ICRC prison visits now that the six-month trial period has finished (ref E). Muller noted that the confidential report will be submitted to the Government of Uzbekistan in the near future "and then we will have to wait to see how the Uzbeks react." Muller was clear that ICRC will need to have access to all prisons if a prison visit program is to continue, and he added that there has been no access to detention centers operated by the National Security Service (NSS) since 2004. Muller noted that ICRC must continuously assess whether its work in Uzbekistan is useful and worthwhile or whether it actually makes things worse for the prisoners. He also reminded that ICRC is seen as a non-Muslim, Western entity and has to work hard to convince interlocutors that it is a neutral organization. Muller stressed the need to be "insistent, patient, and clear" in dialogue with Uzbekistan and emphasized that sanctions would only make matters worse and likely prompt an overreaction in response to perceived "dishonor."

Comment:

¶ 7. (C) Divining the intentions of Karimov and the Government of Uzbekistan is an inexact science. However, the promotion of Berdiyev and Mirzayev, both of whom have been (in the context of Uzbekistan) more forward-leaning about cooperation with the United States, could be a signal that Karimov is ready to further improve relations. Russia's actions in the Caucasus have no doubt served as a reminder of Uzbekistan's strategic and economic vulnerability in the face of its former ruler and provide the context for a discreet, but important change in attitudes towards the U.S. Such a shift is anything but certain and could easily be reversed by actions that put Karimov on the defensive. Nevertheless, LTG Lovelace's visit and follow-up provide an opportunity to discern both how vulnerable the GOU feels and how far it is willing to travel on the path of cooperation with the U.S. to find balance in its strategic position.

NORLAND